

**SUMMARY OF THE
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 10, 2001**

The Accrediting Authority Committee (Committee) of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Monday, January 10, 2001, at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. Louis Johnson of the Louisiana Dept. of Environmental Quality. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the distributed agenda issues.*

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Johnson welcomed the committee members to the teleconference. Minutes of the December 28, 2000, meeting are being completed and will be reviewed at the next meeting.

AARB ISSUES

Mr. Johnson introduced Ms. Judy Duncan of the Accrediting Authority Review Board (AARB) to discuss several issues that the AARB has requested inputs from this committee.

Secondary Accreditation

Ms. Duncan reported that some states have inquired as to the possibility of becoming a NELAC secondary accrediting authority while not holding primary accrediting authority status. The glossary in Chapter One contains the following definitions:

Primary Accrediting Authority: the agency or department designated at the Territory, State or Federal level as the recognized authority with responsibility and accountability for granting NELAC accreditation for a specified field of testing.

Secondary Accrediting Authority: the Territorial, State or federal agency that grants NELAC accreditation to laboratories, based upon their accreditation by a NELAP-recognized Primary Accrediting Authority.

She noted that while the present definition of NELAC accrediting authorities is silent on whether a secondary accrediting authority must first hold credentials as a primary accrediting authority, this possibility is not anticipated in the NELAC Standard. This option would permit a state to hold a limited NELAC credential while recognizing the laboratory assessments performed by a NELAC primary accrediting authority. Following discussion of the issues, it was noted that the current purpose of the status of secondary accrediting authority is to formalize cross-recognition of primary accrediting authorities, and that use of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) logo implies that the adequacy of the programs have been documented. It was also noted that there is no restriction on a state's adopting a position as being a "NELAC-recognizing state."

Mr. Johnson will draft a letter for committee review to NELAP that states the committee opinion on this subject. The letter will recommend that a letter be distributed to non-NELAP Accrediting Authority states prior to the Seventh NELAC Annual Meeting (NELAC 7) inquiring of their interest in explicitly addressing the concept of a “NELAP recognition state”.

Appeals Issue

Ms. Duncan then introduced the issue of a laboratory appeals process, noting that AARB has been suggested as an appropriate focal point for such appeals. She noted that the NELAC Standard specifies that each accrediting authority must have a functional appeals process, that AARB is not chartered to handle such appeals, and that its workload will likely not permit this expanded role, considering it meets infrequently. Members of the committee agreed that a clearinghouse is needed for independent resolution of unresolved appeals; it was suggested that the NELAP Director should receive such appeals and would be free to refer them to other groups, including AARB, for resolution. This issue is important for laboratories operating in several states, where interpretation of the NELAC Standard is deemed to be inconsistent. Additionally, the *ad hoc* accrediting authority workgroup, which meets biweekly, might be able to address such issues.

It was agreed that a process must be developed for inclusion in the NELAC Standard for resolution of unresolved appeals, without becoming overly prescriptive. This process should produce a binding interpretation in a short time and could come from the *ad hoc* accrediting authority workgroup, the Board of Directors, the NELAP Director or AARB. It was agreed that Mr. Paul Baker, Mr. George Krisztian, and Mr. Scott Hoatson will draft an appeal process for consideration by the NELAP Director.

SOPs for NELAP

Ms. Duncan noted that AARB’s annual report listed eight findings intended to direct development of standard operating procedures (SOPs). However, this report is not yet widely available. Mr. Johnson will follow up on this.

Discussion of Draft Questionnaire

Two questionnaires have been drafted by committee members for evaluation of consistency of assessment by accrediting authorities and laboratories. It was noted that the On-site Assessment Committee has been contacted and is aware of this effort but currently has a different focus than this effort.

Mr. Hoatson reviewed the current drafts of the questionnaires and the rationale for their structure and questions. It was agreed that the questionnaires should be expanded, but their intended audience is not yet clear. It was also suggested that questions should extend beyond audits to include proficiency testing samples, document reviews, SOPs, etc. Mr. Stephen Arms will share information on this suggestion.

STATUS OF QMP DOCUMENT

This issue was postponed to the next meeting.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of this committee is scheduled for January 24, 2001.

**ACTION ITEMS
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 10, 2001**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Mr. Johnson will draft a letter for committee review to NELAP that state the committee opinion on this subject. This letter will explicitly addressing this category of membership.	01/19/01
2.	Mr. Baker, Mr Krisztian, and Mr. Hoatson will draft an appeal process for consideration of the NELAP director.	02/15/01
3.	Mr. Johnson will follow up on distribution of the AARB annual report.	01/22/01
4.	Mr. Arms will share suggestions for revision of the draft questionnaires with Mr. Hoatson.	02/15/01

**PARTICIPANTS
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 10, 2001**

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